

**ST MARY'S
OLD SWINFORD
Parish Church
MONTHLY NEWS
MAY 2019
ONLINE EDITION**

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Parish Church
MONTHLY NEWS
MAY 2019**



50p

PRIEST IN CHARGE:

The Revd John Flitcroft
The Rectory
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Stourbridge, DY8 2HA
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st.mary.os.priest@btconnect.com

CURATE:

The Revd Alex French
58 Arlington Court
Old Swinford
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SUNDAYS AT ST MARY'S

8.00 am Holy Communion
10.00 am Parish Communion and Children Together
6.30 pm Evensong
10.00 am (second Sunday) Worship Together

WEEKDAYS AT ST MARY'S

Daily: 9.00 am - Morning Prayer (Monday to Thursday)
Daily: 5.00 pm - Evening Prayer (Monday to Thursday)
Wednesday: 1.30 pm - Toddlers' Group at St Mary's (term time) parents
& toddlers
Thursday: 10.30 am - Holy Communion in Lady Chapel
Thursday: 7.30 pm - Bell Ringing Practice
Friday: Choir Practice and Youth Groups (in term time)
Saturday: 10.00 - 12.00 noon - Open Church – refreshments available
Curate Day Off Friday

OTHER REGULAR EVENTS

Prayer Group Third Wednesday in month, 10 -11 am Tel: 393454
Mothers' Union: Second Tuesday at 2.15 pm 392951
St Mary's Walking Group: Last Saturday of the month. Depart 9.30 am

CONTACTS

Reader:	Mr Roger King	379800
Church Wardens:	Mrs Judy Hall	377349
	Mr Antony Tatford	822661
Director of Music:	Mr Richard Hall (Temporary)	
PCC Secretary:	Miss Katey Fletcher	378182
Monthly News Editor:	Vacant	
Safeguarding Officer:	Mrs Liz Fourness	394359
Church Hall and Coach House: - Bookings:	Parish Office	441003
Parish Administrator and Publicity Officer:	Mr John Sutton	441003
Parish Office:	Open 9.00 am -1.00 pm Tuesday to Thursday, 9.00 am to 12.00 noon Friday Closed Saturday, Sunday and Monday	441003
Church website address:	www.stmaryschurcholdswinford.org.uk E-mail: st.mary.os@btconnect.com	
Facebook:	www.facebook.com/stmaryschurcholdswinford	
Magazine e-mail address:	stmary.parishmagazine@hotmail.co.uk	

ENQUIRIES ABOUT WEDDINGS, BANNES OF MARRIAGE, BAPTISMS.

Please come to the Church on Saturday morning between 10.00 am and 11.00 am for Vestry Hour. You will be warmly welcomed. Tea and coffee will be available.

PARISH REGISTER

Baptisms

17 March Jack William Homer

Funerals

28 March Marilyn Thomson Aged 75
2 April Olive Lubke Aged 82
3 April Alan Thomas Aged 68
11 April Iain Robertson Aged 102
12 April Frank Boxell Aged 91

DIARY - MAY 2019

- Thursday 2 10.30 am Holy Communion
Church Hall—Polling Station for Local Elections all day.
- Friday 3 Clergy day off
- Saturday 4 10.00—12.00 noon Open Church and Vestry Hour
7.00 - 9.00 pm Family Games Wine and Cheese
- SUNDAY 5** **THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER**
3.00 pm Baptism
- Tuesday 7 7.30 pm Standing Committee Meeting
- Wednesday 8 Clergy day off
- Thursday 9 10.30 am Holy Communion
- Friday 10 Monthly News Copy Date.
- Saturday 11 10.00—12.00 noon Open Church and Vestry Hour
- SUNDAY 12** **FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER**
Christian Aid Week.
- Tuesday 14 Open the Book team visit Oldswinford Primary School
11.30 am Holy Communion at Hollycroft
1.20 pm Archdeacon's Visitation - Christ Church, Lye.
2.15 pm Mothers' Union in the Coach Hpouse
- Thursday 16 10.30 am Holy Communion
- Friday 17 Clergy day off
- Saturday 18 10.00 - 12.00 noon Open Church and Vestry Hour
12.30 pm Wedding
4.00 pm Visiting Bell Ringers to St Mary's
- SUNDAY 19** **FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER**
12.00 noon Baptism led by Revd Adam Hadley
4.00 pm Induction of the Revd John Flitcroft as Rector.
- Tuesday 21 10.00 am Assembly at Oldswinford Primary School
2.00 pm Tuesday Tea in the Coach House
- Wednesday 22 11.30 am Holy Communion at Holly Lodge
7.30 pm PCC Meeting
- Thursday 23 10.30 am Holy Communion
- Friday 24 Clergy day off
- Saturday 25 9.30 am Walking Group to Langley Green
10.00 - 12.00 noon Open Church and Vestry Hour
7.30 pm Friends of the Music Concert in Church
- SUNDAY 26** **SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER**
School's half term holiday week
- Monday 27
- Tuesday 28 2.15 pm Tuesday Tea in the Narthex.
- Thursday 30 **ASCENSION DAY**
10.30 am Holy Communion.
- Friday 31 Clergy day off

FROM THE RECTORY



Dear Friends,

On Thursday last we were delighted to see the skip had gone from the rectory car park, a most positive sign of progress. As May approaches, Judy and I are looking forward to some slightly quieter times as some of the duties we have shared in past months are passed on, after May 19th, to our new incumbent, John Flitcroft. We thank everyone for their support during the vacancy, a time when all of us together, have maintained the focus of our mission at St Mary's. We have been blessed to have been part of such a wonderful team.

This is a useful opportunity to say a special thank you to the Revd Alex French and to Roger King, LLM. We know that our thanks simply echo the appreciation of all who are grateful for the ministry, leadership, care and compassion with which Alex and Roger have guided us during the vacancy.

Of course there are still important matters to attend to besides the day to day activities of a busy parish. As we write this letter we are preparing for Palm Sunday and the complex schedule of Holy Week. This is a difficult time for some, a time when quiet reflection, private thoughts, shared experiences, and services of re-enactment through the reading of the Passion lead us to focus on some of the most challenging passages in the Gospels.

Good Friday has always seemed such a difficult day. So much of what we associate with the day seems far from good. But at the heart of our faith is the belief that Jesus died for us. His death provided the perfect atoning sacrifice for sin and that through Jesus, our own sins can be forgiven. These beliefs explain why the date of Jesus' crucifixion is considered a "Good" Friday.

And so we turn to the joyous celebration of Easter itself, to Easter Eggs and a day that rightly is still largely reserved as a day of family togetherness.

Soon after Easter we turn our attentions to the APCM on 28th April, the family Cheese and Wine evening on May 4th, the Archdeacon's Visitation on the 14th May and the induction service for John on 19th May, all in need of further preparation.

Do please try to share in these events. Let's celebrate the cooperation and shared joys that have been the feature of the past few months.

Tony and Judy.

ALEC BEEVERS

It was with great sadness that we heard of the death of Alec Beevers. Alec passed away on 10 April following a short but critical illness which he bore with great dignity. The whole church community, alongside everyone who shared, with Alec, the production of this church news publication, send their condolences, love and support to Janet and all the family.

Alec, with Janet, has been a very loyal contributor to the St Mary's community. Together, they have been familiar faces at services, especially the 6.30 Evensong and have served the community in many aspects of much valued work that has been focussed for the benefit of others.

Alec's gentleness of character, his deep and wide knowledge, willingly and kindly shared without undue authority or expectation endeared him to many. He used these skills and abilities to enormous good in his easy yet accurate presentation of service readings and in his enthusiasm for seeking that something slightly different, something that would intrigue and attract, interest and appeal.

Never was this more obvious during his membership of the Parish Magazine committee. Alec was editor from 2003 to 2008 before a break and then resuming the lead role in 2018. Above all, as a member of a team throughout all that time, Alec found the time and devotion to duty to ensure that the Christian ministry of St Mary's was shared through the monthly magazine and that it reached all those who sought it eagerly or might be responsive to its welcome and invitation to share a common goodness.

Alec was a very knowledgeable man, always keen to encourage others to enquire and to learn, never intrusive, demanding or with unrealistic expectations. With Janet, Alec shared a life in the Oldswinford community that was welcoming, considerate, generous and family orientated. We will all miss him very much but will always be grateful for all that he gave to enrich our life experiences.

"The righteous shall be held in everlasting remembrance.

The memory of the righteous is a blessing."

CHRISTIAN AID WEEK - 12 TO 18 MAY 2019



For more than 70 years, with the help of our amazing supporters, Christian Aid has been helping change the lives of people, of all faiths and none, living in poverty around the world.

Be it when we run a refugee camp for 50,000 Rohingya people in Bangladesh, or work with the peace and justice commission in Colombia or support vulnerable children in Kenya, Christian Aid continues to reach out to

people, regardless of colour, creed, gender, age, sexual orientation and economic or social status

Please do what you can to support Christian Aid Week this year. Please contact Mike Blaxland if you are able to help with the delivery and collection of envelopes in the local area. Mike's email address is mike.blaxland@btinternet.com or Tel 01384 390537

ST MARY'S WALKING GROUP – MARCH WALK

A (very) select group of seven set off on Saturday morning for a walk through Woodgate Valley and into the centre of Birmingham. It was quite misty when we left the Church car park but as we arrived at Woodgate Valley Country Park this had been replaced by glorious sunshine and endless blue sky.

Setting off from the car park we walked downhill between wooden fencing separating us from where several horses were grazing. There is a riding school at the Country Park as well. At the bottom of the hill we decided to cross to the far path by the stream. This is just a track and not a surfaced path as on the near side which has recently been completed to allow access for all and can be very busy with cyclists of varying levels of proficiency. As the weather had been dry we kept our boots clean. There was enough hard surface which we would be walking on later. Exiting Woodgate Valley we crossed the road and joined the Bourn Brook Way with plenty of wildlife and flora to see. After about an hour and a half we reached the Queen Elizabeth hospital and University train station. Disappearing through a gap in the railway bridge we descended onto the Birmingham and Worcester canal for a walk along the tow path for another hour to arrive at Gas Street basin. Of great interest was the polite nature of the cyclists who, without fail, thanked us for moving out of their way after warning us with a bell! Even the Canada geese refrained from hissing at us. Clearly the overall good manner transfers between species. Lunch was taken at the Brasshouse on Broad Street followed by an interesting bus ride on the 23 back to the Woodgate Country Park. An excellent day out for the seven who returned unscathed having braved the warm wall to wall sunshine from start to finish.

Tony and Sue Wakeley

ST DUNSTAN

St Dunstan, as the story goes,
Once pull'd the devil by the nose
With red-hot tongs, which made him roar,
That he was heard three miles or more.

St Dunstan was an English cleric born around 910 AD, becoming amongst other things, Bishop of Worcester and Archbishop of Canterbury. He is the patron saint of bell ringers, his feast day falls on 19th May every year.

He was born in Somerset, the son of Heorstan, a Wessex nobleman. As a boy he studied under Irish monks who then occupied the ruins of Glastonbury Abbey. He was noted for his devotion to learning and his mastery of practical craftsmanship.

After receiving minor orders he was summoned by his uncle Athelm, the Archbishop of Canterbury, to enter his service. He was later appointed to the court of King Athelstan, where he quickly became a favourite of the king. This favouritism upset many other members of the court, and after having been falsely accused of witchcraft, he was physically attacked by others, badly beaten and then thrown into a cesspit.

Not surprisingly, this event caused Dunstan to re-appraise his future. Accordingly, he then returned to Glastonbury to live the life of a hermit. He built a workshop against the wall of the church of St Mary, it was here that he studied, played his harp, and worked at his anvil.

St Dunstan was much concerned with the architectural fabric of the church and as such developed his practical ingenuity by experimenting with the design and forging of church bells. It was his success in this, and the subsequent importance given to the sound of church bells, that led to him being adopted as the patron saint of all bell ringers.

A story is told of how Dunstan was working at his forge one evening when an old man appeared at the door. Dunstan realised that his visitor was really the devil in disguise, but pretending not to notice, he continued working the red hot metal on his anvil. He then took up his tongs and placed them in the forge until they too were red hot. Then pulling them from the fire he turned round and seized the devil by the nose, then led his roaring diabolical visitor away from his workshop.

In 943 AD Dunstan, under the patronage of King Edmund, became the Abbot of Glastonbury. During his time as Abbot, Dunstan caused much rebuilding and restoration work to be undertaken. Excavations in the abbey have revealed remains of his great cloister, and of glass and metal furnaces dating back to this time. In 957 he was appointed Bishop of Worcester, and two years later, briefly Bishop of London. For the last twenty-eight years of his life he was a well-regarded Archbishop of Canterbury, dying on 19th May 988 AD.

Stephen Howard.



As we look forward to John's installation as the new Rector of St Mary's, Old Swinford, he has kindly provided this short introduction .

JOHN FLITCROFT

My parents were Lancastrians from Bolton, but I was born in Skipton, North Yorkshire and grew up in south Cumbria, on the Furness peninsula. It was there that I learnt to love birdwatching, hillwalking and dry-stone walling. My Mum was a Methodist and my Dad a devout, God-seeking atheist.

Mary and I met at a college in Ripon, North Yorkshire where she trained to be a teacher. I wanted to impress her so I was confirmed as a member of the Church of England in our college chapel. She has been my spiritual inspiration ever since. Her first job was in Birmingham and she moved here in 1985, living in Sparkhill. I joined her the following year when I began work for the Civil Service as a law clerk with the newly formed CPS.

I then worked as an actor for 25 years, mostly in theatre but also in radio, which I particularly enjoyed, and a little in television. The theatrical community in the West Midlands is very tightknit and we still have many friends from that world.

We have lived in Smethwick far longer than anywhere else and returned last December to the house which our family calls home. Our two daughters, Rebecca and Molly, who have taught us much about love and faith, grew up there. Rebecca, like her Mum, is an artist and studying for an MA in children's book illustration at Goldsmith's in London. Molly studied theology at Exeter but is now living in Edinburgh where she is pursuing her interest in the human mind and heart by studying for a degree in counselling.

Smethwick is a place of great faith and many faiths and my Christian identity has been forged there. Our vicar at Holy Trinity, Jim Cox, was the first to suggest I might seek ordination. An idea repeated by the present incumbent, Rev'd David Gould. I trained for ministry at The Queen's Foundation which was a wonderful, formative experience. Our first post was at All Saints, Four Oaks, (Sutton Coldfield), where my training incumbent was Reverend Canon Adrian Leahy. This was a very happy curacy in a place quite different from Smethwick. We were made to feel very welcome and treasured by Adrian and a loyal, faithful congregation.

The end of the curacy was closing in when Birmingham Diocese asked me to consider an interim ministry at St George, Edgbaston, providing cover whilst their vicar Rev'd Julian Francis became Interim Archdeacon of Birmingham. I applied for the post at St Mary's just before that appointment and we were told I had been successful just after I began at Edgbaston. This meant that, on only my second Sunday, I announced our next move - rather

disconcerting both for us and for the congregation! We feel very fortunate to have shared this time with all the kind and generous people of St George's. The church building is very grand and graceful but the deep beauty of the place lies in the spiritual longing of the church members and their desire for community. After even such a short time there, saying goodbye is not going to be easy!

Mary and I are very excited to begin our ministry at St Mary's and to start to make our home at the Rectory. We have been struck already by the friendliness of those we have met and we are very grateful for all the help we've had from Judy and Tony, your dedicated churchwardens. It seems like it has been a very long wait since we first heard that God is calling us to share with you the work of telling the Good News of Jesus amongst the people of Old Swinford. However the wait has only served to heighten our anticipation and deepen our desire to begin. We look forward very much to meeting you all.

John and Mary Flitcroft

ST MARY'S WITH ST JOHN'S MOTHERS' UNION

On Tuesday 9th April Roger King, St Mary's Lay Reader, led our Passiontide Meditation Service. This day each year commemorates the martyrdom of the Lutheran Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer in 1945.

He combatted Nazi anti-semitism and led the German Confessing Church until its closure by the Nazis. He was deeply involved in German resistance, and was imprisoned in 1943. He was later hanged by the Gestapo less than a month before the end of War in Europe May 1945.

In his writings, including letters and papers from prison, he discussed the place of Christian belief in the modern world. This is very relevant in our modern challenging times.

Our passionate prayer: God of compassion, you regard the forsaken and give hope to the crushed in spirit; hear those who cry to you in distress and bring your ransomed people to sing your glorious praise, now and forever. Amen

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

NEXT MEETING: Tuesday, 14th May, 2.15 pm in the Coach House: "A Stitch in Time"- Dawn Nex.

DIOCESAN COUNCIL: Wednesday 8th May, 9.30 am, St Saviours Church, West Hagley.

DEANERY FESTIVAL: Thursday 17th October, 2.30 pm, St Saviours Church, West Hagley.

Dawn Nex

APPOINTMENT OF DIRECTOR OF MUSIC

We are delighted to announce that Mr James Bradley has been offered, has accepted and has signed a contract to become our new Director of Music with a starting date of 12 July 2019.

Following an extensive search and enquiry by a much valued team of knowledgeable and qualified people the role of Director of Music was advertised nationally. There were many enquiries and the core team had to undertake a serious review of all applications that ultimately led to an audition and interview for the shortlisted candidates.

James has for the past six years been Director of Music at St Mary's and All Saints Church, Kidderminster. Many of us will have shared in the musical worship at this church, notably at the retirement of the Revd Owain Bell.

James will serve out his notice at St Mary's and All Saints, before enjoying his honeymoon, in advance of his undertaking of his duties at St Mary's, Old Swinford. We look forward to welcoming James to the Christian community of Old Swinford in anticipation of the maintenance of the strong musical tradition in worship of St Mary's and the exciting opportunities that may arise for development and innovation.

We extend our thanks to everyone who has contributed to the challenging process of seeking a new Director of Music and to all who contribute to the music that enhances our worship.

The Churchwardens

CHRISTIAN AID WEEK

Christian Aid Week starts on 12 May and this year's focus is on maternal health in Sierra Leone, sharing the key message of "All mums should live."

Church volunteers have collected donations during Christian Aid Week since it began more than 60 years ago to help people living in extreme poverty to protect themselves when disaster strikes.

Sierra Leone is the most dangerous place in the world to become a mum as they lack the funds to provide basic healthcare. Pregnancy and childbirth is a time of fear for women; there is only one midwife per ten thousand people. Many women cannot afford to travel the long distances to hospitals, and consequently give birth at home with aid from traditional birthing attendants. Complex births sometimes challenge the attendants' limited skill-set and many women lose their babies and sometimes their lives.

Women who fear giving birth at home often walk to hospital when labour pains begin. Jebbeh's sister was one of these women; sadly, she didn't make it to hospital and she died with her baby by the side of the road. Jebbeh is expecting her own baby, and she is scared.

This Christian Aid Week, funds will be raised to help women like Jebbeh give birth safely. Christian Aid want to fund health clinics, health worker training, sanitation training and equipment, to make giving birth a time of celebration, not fear.

LETTER FROM THE DIOCESE

Bwana asifiwe' were the Swahili words I kept hearing during a recent visit to Tanzania. It's used as a greeting and means 'Praise the Lord'.

As a group from the Diocese of Worcester visiting our sisters and brothers in Christ in the Diocese of Morogoro, we were caught up in many times of praise. Together we sang and prayed, talked and danced. People, young and old, seemed to almost burst with joy; the women clicking their tongues from side to side in their mouths to make the unique ululating sound.

Their joyfulness will long remain with me. As we travelled around the diocese, we kept meeting people, especially in remote villages, who, more often than not, had little economic means and little 'stuff', yet had lives that were overflowing with generosity, delight, hope and joy.

This shouldn't have come as a surprise to me. Many years ago, C.S. Lewis' book *Surprised by Joy* opened my eyes to an understanding that joy can be found in the depths of our being. It is the pearl of great price.

Words of Mother Julian of Norwich that "the fullness of joy is to see God in all things" came back to me as I looked at the joyous faces of people eating a simple meal of rice and plantain.

I realised in Morogoro that the Western Church has too often lost its pearl and desperately needs to re-find it. We've stopped expecting to see God in all things and need to re-open our eyes.

I wonder where joy features in your life and in the life of your church?

The Gospel turns despair into hope, scarcity into abundance, sadness into joy. Do our lives reflect that? Or do we tend to wear our funeral faces too frequently?

Pope Francis recently said, "Christians should share their joy, point to a horizon of beauty and invite others to a delicious banquet". He went on to say that "an evangelising community is filled with joy; it knows how to rejoice always".

As God's Kingdom People in the Diocese of Worcester, when might you be joyful today and how might you share that with someone else?



Bishop Graham

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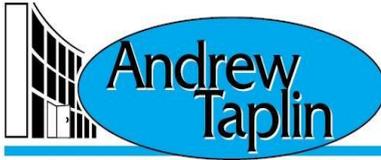
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